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Intelligence Agencies Failed In Iraq Plot

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If the Baghdad army revolt and change of regime in Iraq had found the United States without a Central Intelligence Agency, the shock would have been great enough to create one.

But the United States has had such an agency for a decade. What does one say now about the CIA in view of the success of the Baghdad plotters in keeping their secret until the last explosive moment?

Several things can be said. For one, the exact plan seems to have been carried in the head of only one man, an Iraqi army brigadier named Abdul Karim Qassim, the new premier. This would make any detection extremely difficult, no matter how good the intelligence service.

It could also be pointed out that not only the CIA failed apparently to get an advance line on the plot. So did all the other intelligence agencies, including King Faisal's Iraqi government regime, along with the Turks, the Iranians and the British.

But when all the favorable things are pointed out, including the fact that the CIA did predict in a general way that some revolt was likely in Iraq, the fact remains that something more is needed.

It is a certainty that all this is more evident to the intelligence agencies themselves, than to anybody outside, and that demands for a tightening up already have gone down the chain of command in the CIA as well as in the intelligence services of other involved nations.

What does this mean? It should mean more effective efforts in getting information, and doubtless does.

It also should mean improvement in evaluating and using information that intelligence agents gather, sometimes at the risk of death.

The classic complaint of intelligence agents—and the most common reason they quit their jobs—is that information they gather is ignored, or poorly evaluated by those above them who should make use of it.

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